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2 September 1981

Mr Owen Carron M.P.
Enniskillen
Co Fermanagh

Dear Mr Carron

I have been asked by the Taoiseach, Dr Garret FitzGerald, T.D., to acknowledge receipt of your second telegram, received on 31 August, requesting a meeting with him to discuss the issues which arose in the recent election campaign in Fermanagh-South Tyrone, principally the H-Block hunger strike.

The Taoiseach does not consider that any useful purpose would be served by this meeting. He has also asked me to say that the Government will be continuing in their efforts to help in finding a solution to the H-Block situation and in reaching a settlement of the problems affecting Northern Ireland, through the elimination of violence and of division among Irishmen.

In view of the publicity attending your request, this letter is being released for publication.

Yours sincerely

Walter P. Keenan

Further request for meeting with the Taoiseach from
Mr Owen Carron M.P.

To: Secretary to the Government

From: W. Kirwan, Assistant Secretary

1. Please see the telegram beneath requesting a meeting with the Taoiseach and the draft reply I have prepared for issue on behalf of the Taoiseach. The matter is, of course, intensely political and the Taoiseach's concurrence would be required for any course of action contemplated.
2. The confusion to which reference is made in the telegram probably relates to newspaper reports linking the previous refusal to see Mr Carron with the suggestion that he be accompanied by H-Block Committee people and relatives of the hunger strikers and referring to the "sit-in" by some relatives on the occasion of the Taoiseach's last meeting with them. Reference was made to these factors when Mr Carron's request was raised on margin of the preview conference last week but it was my clear understanding that the intention was that the request should in any case be rejected tout court. The draft reply has been prepared on this basis.
3. As I see it, the reasons for not meeting Mr Carron are as follows:-
 - (1) the need, particularly at the present time, to support the moderate political forces in the North, especially the SDLP.
 - (2) Mr Carron's clear identification with and support for the Provisional IRA campaign of violence, as witness the attached press report (to which I refer in the draft letter) and his speech in Crossmaglen last Sunday; he is seen by the Protestant community in the North as a hate and war-monger and to see him will alienate many of them.
 - (3) the Government's decision to disengage themselves from the H-Blocks situation which recently led the Taoiseach not to accede to a request from the President of the GAA to meet him.

.../

4. On the other hand, it can be argued that Mr Carron is an elected representative who secured 31,000 votes in the recent by-election and that many Nationalists in the North, including many who do not sympathise with the Provos, will be upset and puzzled if he is not met. There is also the fact that he is having a private meeting with the leader of the Opposition and has been met by Mr Alison, the Minister of State in the Northern Ireland Office. I would comment that the British conventions are strongly in favour of M.P.s being met by Ministers, on request. Different considerations apply here where the Government's rejection of fellow-travellers of violence should be made fully manifest at all times.

5. In my view, the contra arguments are such and so outweigh the pro arguments as to suggest that Mr Carron should not be met at all at Ministerial level.

6. I was aware that the Tanaiste had received a telegram with a similar request. I have just now been told that he proposes to see Mr Carron as early as tomorrow, unless the Taoiseach is opposed. It will be clear from the above that I consider the Taoiseach should indicate his opposition, as the Tanaiste will be seen, in the Taoiseach's announced absence on holiday, as the acting Head of Government.

7. I attach a copy of Mrs Thatcher's reply to Mr Carron.

W Kirwan

1 September 1961